

Law Enforcement Center Building Temporarily Halted

The people of Prince George's County have prevailed in the first round of the action to deter fragmentation and development of the counted-on open space of the nearby federal property belonging presently to the Department of Agriculture.

The Department of the Treasury, the agency desiring to build their new Consolidated Law Enforcement Training Center on a 500-acre segment of Agriculture property, agreed in court on Friday, May 18 that further construction will not proceed until such time as a new environmental impact statement has been filed as requested by the Prince George's County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

It will probably be at least three months before the statement can be prepared; and after it is filed 90 days must elapse to provide time for public "review and comment" as required by the Environmental Protection Act.

The impact statement will be filed with and reviewed by the Council on Environmental Quality, the President's advisory and policy-making body. Parties to the suit against Treasury may then request a hearing by that council if they dispute the facts or conclusions of the impact statement.

Treasury's agreement came, somewhat surprisingly, early in the proceedings as Judge Howard Corcoran interrupted Counsel for the plaintiff David Freishtat, after only several minutes of his opening argument, to ask why on the basis of the facts presented the parties were in court.

When it was answered that Treasury would not agree for-

mally, in writing not to begin construction although they had verbally done so, Judge Corcoran requested that they agree to wait. Lawyers for Treasury complied with the judge's requests. Such stipulation in court has the binding force of

law and has the same effect that an injunction would have, had the proceeding gone further.

The Commission filed suit against the General Services Administration and the Department of the Treasury last February for their alleged violation of the National Environmental Policy Act which required that an Environmental Impact Statement be issued regarding the Training Center proposed for a portion of the Department of Agriculture research farm.

The Calverton Citizens Association voted to enter the litigation (see THE OUTLOOK, May 1972) and a motion to intervene has been filed by Attorney Michael S. Yaroschuk, 13237 Bellvue Street, who is representing CCA in this action.

In the memorandum...in support of motion to intervene, CCA states that "the Association has steadfastly opposed the Government's proposal which would result in the destruction of the existing open green space in the area and which will have a direct ad-

verse effect upon the existing water and sewer facilities and support facilities, such as fire protection, if the proposed expansion is permitted to continue."

The memorandum further states that "...citizens have not only a right to the preservation of natural surroundings, the environment, as it presently exists, but also have a direct economic interest in the development of this property.

"Further, the burden upon existing sewer and water facilities will be multiplied. At the present time, building has been curtailed (sic) in the Anacostia River Basin and Parkway River basin because of lack of sufficient sewage treatment facilities. Both Prince George's County and Montgomery County have adopted staying policies to stem the tide of "urban sprawl" and to give direction to the uncontrolled development of the present open lands and to establish a hierarchy of commitment of the available tax revenues."

"The proposal of the Treasury Department to expand its present facilities ignores the needs of the community and the impact upon the quality of life to which these citizens are entitled.

"In passing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969...Congress sought to impose restraints on the federal Act to avoid environmental degradation, preserve historic, cultural, and natural resources and promote the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without...undesirable and unintended consequences."

Further reason for intervention in the suit is stated thus: "The interest of the Intervenor is not identical to that of the Plaintiff. While each seeks to restrain the construction of the project, the Intervenor is the only one who can speak for the local residents who will bear the burden of the Government's action.

"Clearly, under the recent cases, the Intervenor represents a sufficient interest in the suit which must be recognized.

"As Governmental bodies, the Plaintiffs may well choose to conclude the matter on grounds unsatisfactory to the Intervenor. The only way that the Intervenor can be assured that it is heard, is to participate believes bear directly upon its membership.

*The
Calverton
Outlook
Beltsville
Silver Spring
June 1972*